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Approved For Release 2004/01/21 : CIA-RDP80M00165A001600200008-8

FOI 77-4793

23 May 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Paul V. Walsh
ADDI

THROUGH :
DDI FOIA Coordinator

FROM :

SUBJECT : Release of Classified Document to Frank Snapp

1. We recommend that the attached document, which almost certainly is the one Frank Snapp referred to in his talk with the Director, be declassified and released to Mr. Snapp in full.

2. The reasons for this recommendation are:

- a. The information in the document is two years old or older. There was good reason to give the document a high classification when it was prepared -- October 1975 -- because we were still close in time to the events discussed, and because the people running US foreign policy at the time would have been totally opposed to the release of information on the analyses and judgments of the intelligence community during the last months of the Vietnam war. Neither of these conditions now applies.
- b. The document does not reveal sensitive information on sources and methods. There are several references to the very good clandestine source that we had within the Vietnamese Communist southern command (COSVN), but none of these references would allow him to be identified -- assuming he is still alive in Vietnam. The document also has several references to the movements or locations of North Vietnamese army divisions that are based on information derived from . The source is not, however, revealed in the text. Otherwise, the document contains analytical judgments and excerpts of various NIEs, interagency memoranda, and DCI briefings done at the time -- which are themselves basically analytical judgments.

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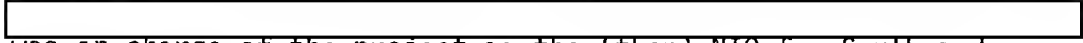
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- c. Nothing contained in the document would damage current US policy moves on Vietnam. The war is over. The release of this document may result in a few press articles raking over what happened in the last months of the fighting and how well or badly we in the intelligence community did in our analyses, but that is all.

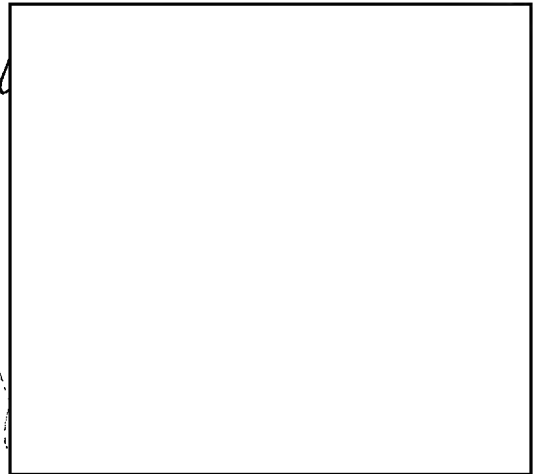
3. The document in question was prepared at the request of former Director William Colby. It was written by the undersigned --


was in charge of the project as the (then) NIO for South and Southeast Asia.

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4. The DDO should be asked for its views on the releasability of this document because of the references, described above, to a particular clandestine source. The NSC Staff should probably also be asked to approve the release of the document, because included within it are excerpts of briefings presented by Director Colby in 1975 to the NSC and to the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), which was a subcommittee of the NSC.

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Attachment:
a/s

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October 22, 1975

D R A F T

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Effectiveness of US Intelligence Analysis on Vietnam,
December 1974 - April 1975

KEY POINTS

- American intelligence made a continuous, voluminous, and high quality input to US policy makers in the months immediately preceding the end of the war in Vietnam.
- In December 1974, a National Intelligence Estimate correctly assessed North Vietnamese strategy and plans for the first half of 1975.
 - This NIE concluded that in response to a major opportunity the communists might launch an all-out offensive to exploit the situation.
 - The consequences of Thieu's ill-planned and poorly executed decision in mid-March to retrench militarily gave Hanoi such an opportunity, and the North Vietnamese quickly exploited it.
 - The criticality of US military assistance, or lack thereof, was emphasized as a key factor conditioning both South Vietnam's will to resist and North Vietnam's willingness to escalate the level of fighting.
- The record is not without some deficiencies, but they were minor:
 - Early on, the resiliency of the South Vietnamese forces was overestimated.
 - There was an initial tendency to underestimate the speed and success with which the communists would move to exploit the situation.
- Within three weeks of Thieu's mid-March decision, however, the intelligence community concluded that South Vietnam's fate was sealed and that within a short time North Vietnam would emerge victorious.
 - Beginning in early April 1975, the community concluded that the best the non-communists could obtain would be a negotiated surrender on

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